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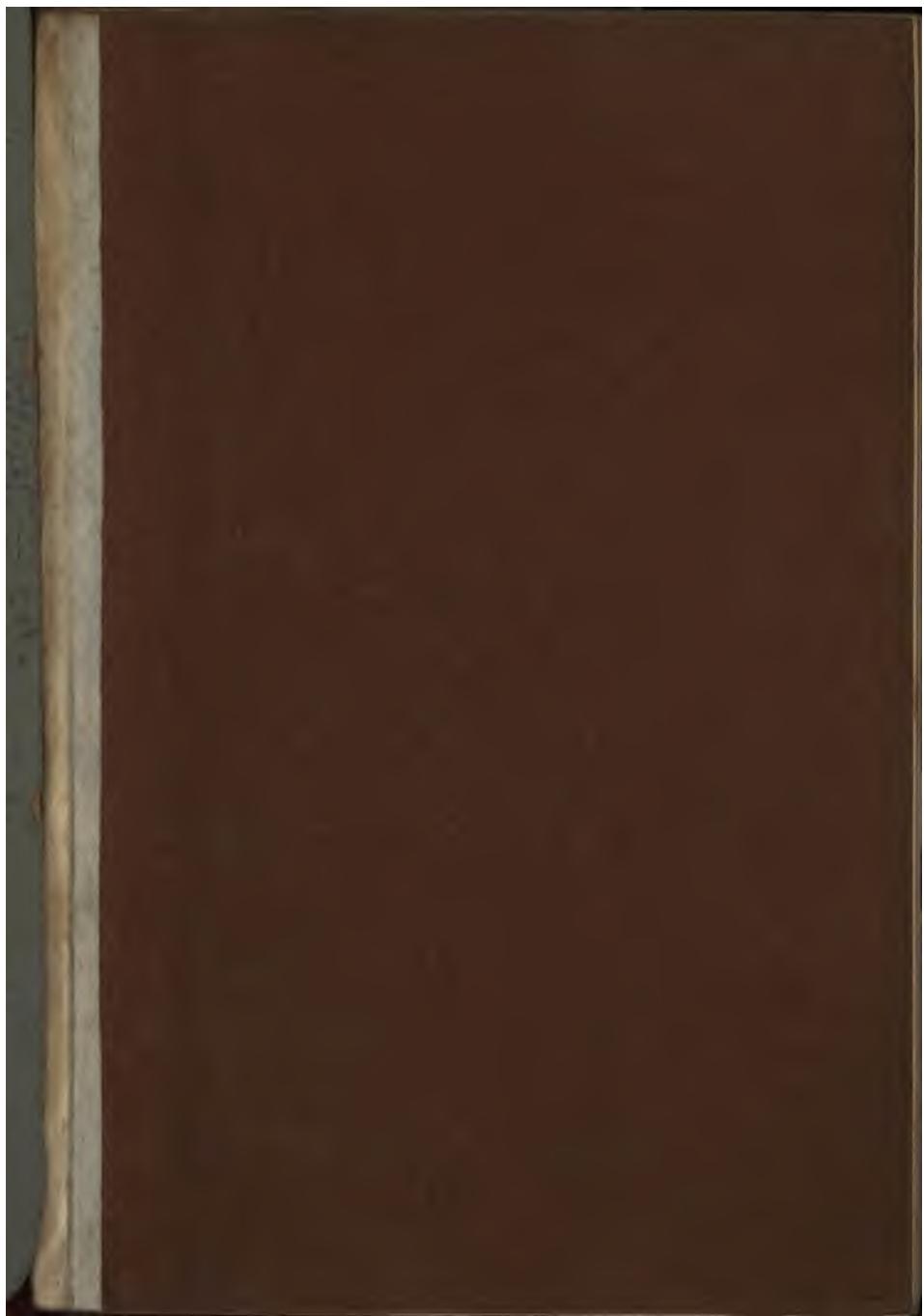
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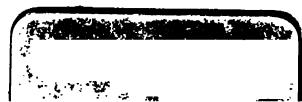
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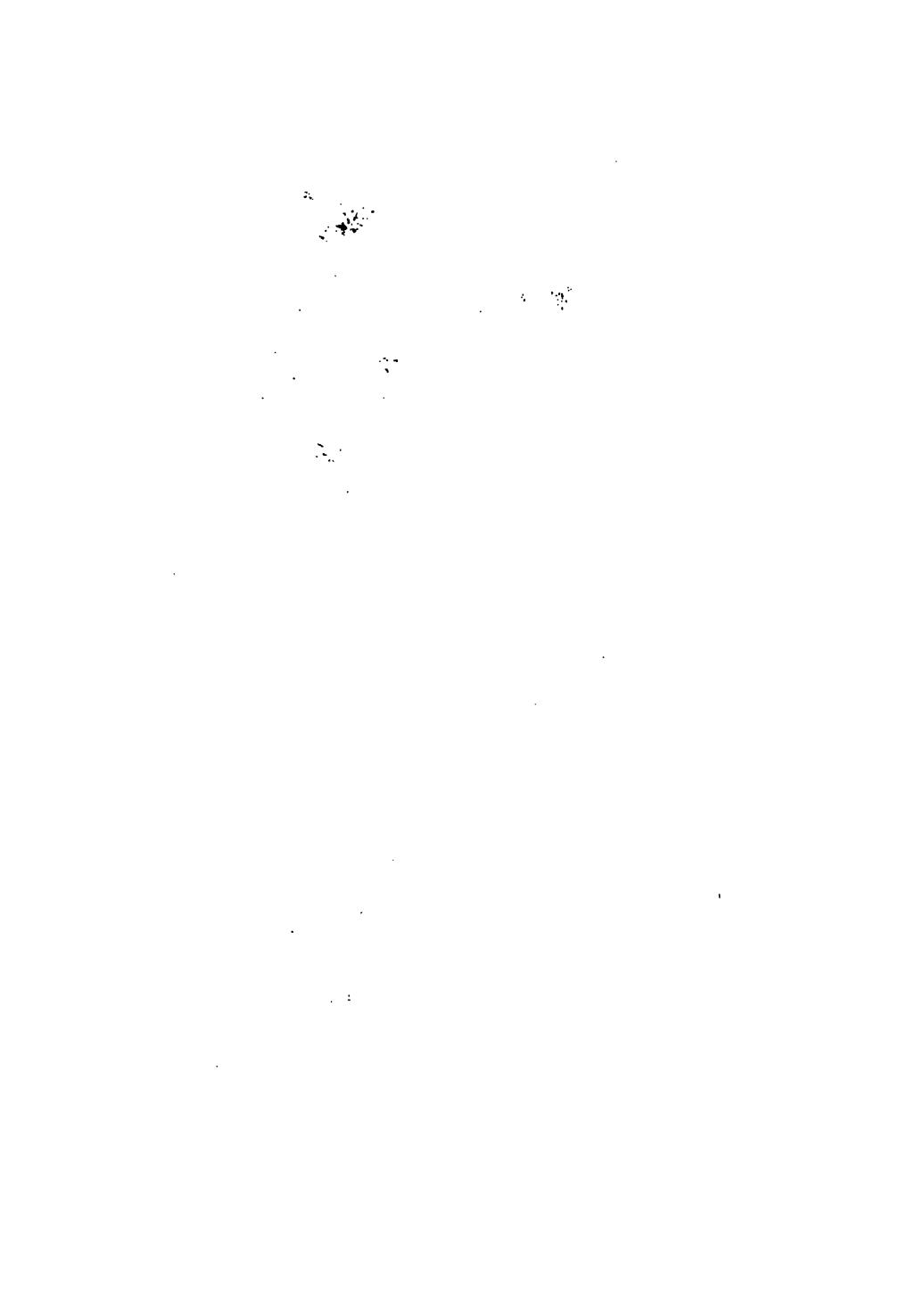
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University of Oxford
 PRIZE POEM ON A SACRED SUBJECT.
 1869.

The Day of Pentecost.

BY
 JOHN WHITE,
 FELLOW OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE.



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The Day of Pentecost.

“**T**OGETHER, in one place, with one accord—”

As they, for whom a sudden stroke of death
Has stricken upon the house, and all is stilled
Where moved a life of gentle graciousness,
Sit desolate, drawn closer each to each
By silent sympathy of sorrow shared,
Dear common memories, and one awful hope,
That, even yet, his spirit is in their midst—
So sat the Chosen. Not again to them—

Ah, lives forlorn and darkened! not again—
Among the Olives or beside the Lake,
Those words, that made the hearts within them
burn,
Strange words, and chiding of soft eyes divine,
Should show the way to sweeten life and death
With trust in God, and love of all He made,
And kindly brotherhood of men to men.
For now indeed the world was drear and cold,
A world of trial, pains and martyrdom,
With no strong hand of help, no gentle guide,
No high approval, comfortable words,
To cheer them through their separate lonely toils.
But though no grief be ever like to theirs,
No loss being ever like, yet never grief
So shone transfigured by the awful faith,
That, even yet, the lost one lived to save,
As on those reverend brows, serene, prepared
To wait the end in utter trustfulness.
So sat the Chosen, silent, sorrowful,

Expectant. *Suddenly there came a sound
From Heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind,
And filled the house, and, with the rushing sound,
The gleam of fiery shapes, and over all
The Spirit of God descended manifest.*

O through the ages part by part revealed
And ever leading upward infinitely
Thy creatures, and more wide and wider yet
Scattering Thy gifts of light throughout the
world—

O Thou, who only art, while all things else
In slow unwearying of growth and change
Unroll Thy purposes; whom search of men,
That sought in darkness, even in darkness found,
Bewildered at the flux of things, and hailed
Sole Being, Giver of life and Cause of all,
Pervading Spirit of the universe—
Not any day, since first the race of men,
Thine image, walked erect the wondering earth

Amid the monstrous forms of ruder life—
Not any day, through all the changing times,
Wherein Thy wondrous purpose led us forth
By sure degrees to higher and higher estate—
Not any day so charged with great intent,
With general love and mercies unconfined,
Has shown Thy glory forth, and left a name
For ever holiest in the tale of days,
As this, whereon Thy Saviour's work was sealed,
And all the peoples called to know their God.

Of old with other voice Thou calledst men—
What time Thy covenant was joined with him,
Who journeyed faithful all the weary ways
From Haran unto Canaan ; and with him,
Who heard Thy promise from the bush that burned ;
Or when the lightnings and the thunder's voice,
Thine heralds, spake Thee present in the cloud
That overshadowed Sinai's awful brow—
Then didst Thou call, as one who calls his own—

A father sons, his near and special care—
Thine own peculiar people: but this day,
Bursting the bonds of race, proclaimed a God
Of fatherhood to all of woman born.

As when one watches from the shores at dawn
A summer's sun uprisen on spreading seas,
That toward him flings across the parted tide
An ever-broadening path of shimmering gold
And sets the whole shore shining: but afar
The glory narrows, and, on either hand—
So straitly spans the seas that golden trail—
No wandering shafts of radiance fire the verge;
Beneath him, sparkles all the gladdened beach:
Then saith the watcher, “Surely this were strange,
“That God's just light, the equal, constant sun,
“Should leave, far off, unkindled spaces wan,
“To beam on others. Nay! with us the fault—
“Our sight is blindness, and the heavens are just:
“Enough for us to bless the beams we have!”

So we, who marvel at that glorious dawn,
The day of Fiery Tongues, and all it brought—
The scattering broadcast of the lights of God,
That thither stretched in narrow line and strait,
Gifts for a few, a people's heritage—
Not idly searching wherefore this was willed,
Accept the day, and, knowing God is good,
Know that, to all the ages, all was well.

And even we, however blind to scan . . .
The secret ordering of the times of God,
In this great day may darkly read His will,
Why came it when it came. For now the way
Was smoothed for mighty change: the world was
ripe,
Grown to its manhood, vexed with vague unrest,
Unsatisfied with cold philosophies,
That taught the man to train a straitened soul
In isolation, haughty, self-enwrapt,
The crowd's contemner, or, if serviceable,

E'en that in pride, and serving self the most—
And now the older faiths lay dead and scorned,
Or dying, half-believed: for now no more
The joyous freshness of the springtide world,
Instinct with life and passionate love for all
Of grace and strength and sweetness eye could see
Or heart could image, shaped its forms divine
And worshipped that it shaped, till earth and air
Grew quick with life, and teemed with Deity—
And now a race, stern-visaged, strong as fate,
Reared by the Tiber, issuing thence had burst
The petty narrowed bounds of smaller men,
And driven the world to oneness—that before
Was many worlds, not one—of fire and force
To fuse all atoms and to weld a whole
Of such knit texture as might feel throughout
One shock: like him, who deftly kneads the flour,
Till all the dry unclinging several grains,
Worked to a lump, so closely form the dough,
That hence the toil goes lightlier: for he knows

A little leaven now hid within the lump
Will swiftly course it through, and leaven all.

So lay the world. So lie the frozen fields
Before the dawning of the Arctic day,
Sick for the sunshine, loathing wearily
The cold, illusive gleam of fitful lights,
That toy with darkness: then up-leaps the sun,
And routs those mocking lights, and changes all.

So lay the world; and while the wise ones
looked
To other lands for schooling, lo! there cried
From out the bye-ways of a land despised
A voice, that spake, as speaks authority,
However mild of utterance and content
With rude rough listeners to its blessings poured
On charitable, pure, and peaceful hearts,
On hungerers after righteousness, and those
Who mourned, in mute appeal from earth to God.

And it they scorned, as men will ever scorn
Their wisest voice and sweetest, and in death
Would fain have silenced, and have with it stilled
The record of the life, before it spread
Beyond the lowly few, who knew the voice
And loved the life, and so would fain have saved
The older order and repelled the new—
Fools! for the time was come. And then there
shone
The Fiery Tongues, that blazed the truth abroad,
That voice's cry, and wrapt the world in flame.

O fresh and sweet, as, when a wearied man
Steals from the city, thridding silently
Its roar and tumult and unheeding haste,
Its hard-faced eagerness of hurrying throngs,
And gets him to the wastes, and bares his brow
To drink the coolness, comes and breathes thereon
The gentle soothing of the breath of fields,
And lulls the restlessness that chafed his blood;

So sweet to us—who live afar, afar,
Within an age, that, boasting noisily
The fulness of its life, its knowledge ripe,
And busied wholly with its haughty self,
Falls from the fervour of a simpler faith,—
To steal away, in thought, to older days,
Dark days, yet ever, for the eyes that watched,
Flashed through with gleams of present Deity—
The bright example of the spotless life—
God's Spirit poured from Heaven visibly—
And those, the chosen hearts, on whom it fell,
So filled with grace, uplifted mightily,
So wrought to deeds of high devotedness,
That nought withstood them, and the world was
won.

For surely now we live in other days,
Grown hard and proud, like those philosophies
That nipped, of old, the hearts of men, and grown
So drunk with progress and so lost in pride

At all their science sees, that lo ! they lose
The sight of God behind the myriad laws
Wherewith He wills to wield His universe—
Or of ourselves would make us worshippers,
Our common bond, our brief humanity—
In man's own image fashioning their God.
O not, not thus, in those old, faithful days,
They loved the creature in its helplessness,
For love of Him who loved it, Him who gave
A man divine, to shadow forth to all
What wealth of loveliness man's life may know !

Yet not from us, however stray the times
From simple fervency, communion close
With Him, the Steadfast One—yet not from us,
Remembering the day of Fiery Tongues,
Can pass the trust, that ev'n to-day, to-day,
His Spirit is shed abroad, not seen as then,
But none the less outpoured in plenteousness,
Wherever sought ; not working visible signs,

But none the less fulfilling wondrously
His ordered plan ; whatever threats may rise,
What storms soever shake the hearts of men,
Whatever voices rail against our trust,
With wisest words, how all, in turn, must wane,
And newer times need newer faiths than ours.
And not from us,—though all the Churches rave,
Each against each, or torn with inner strife,
Whose is the truest service, meet for God,—
Remembering that day of bounteous love,
Can pass the faith, that One there is, who leads
His own through all the strifes to some far end
Of quiet concord and of trustful rest ;
Nor that large love, which sees a spark divine
In all on whom God breathes the living breath—
Such love, as burns within his heart, who goes—
Like to the saints, on whom the Spirit fell—
To spread the truth, where shrill the Boreal winds
Sweep the dim lands, or where the shameless suns
Pour fiery splendours o'er the naked plains—

That self-less love, that rapt devotedness—
Which whoso shows the most, him do we know
Of men the likest God ; and, seeing him,
Are straightway minded, that the flames, which fell
On that great day from Heaven, may not die ;
But as, of old, they filled the saintly souls
With strength to wrestle on, and change the world,
So burn they now, wherever kindled hearts
In passionate devotion own and bless
One brotherhood of men, and over all
One fatherhood of God's unchanging love.



T. & G. SHRIMPTON, PUBLISHERS, OXFORD.



















